

PURITANISM AND SOCIETY

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Prophecyings—that most revealing episode in early Puritanism—were the cry of a famished generation for enlightenment, for education, for a religion of the intellect; and it was because much "preaching breeds faction, but much praying causes devotion"⁴ that the powers of this world raised their parchment shutters to stem the gale that blew from the Puritan pulpit. He disciplines, rationalizes, systematizes his life; "method" was a Puritan catchword a century before the world had heard of Methodists. He makes his very business a travail of the body for that too is the Lord's vineyard, in which he is called to labour.

Feeling in him that which "maketh him more fearful of displeasing God than all the world,"^a he is a natural republican, for there is none on earth that he can own as master. If powers and principalities will hear and obey, well; if not, they must be ground into dust, that on their ruins the elect may build the Kingdom of Christ. And, in the end, all these—prayer, and toil, and discipline, mastery of self and mastery of others, wounds and death—may be too little for the salvation of a single soul. "Then I saw that there was a way to Sell even from the Gates of Heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction" *—those dreadful words

haunt him as he nears his end. Sometimes
they break
his heart. More often, for grace abounds
even to the
chief of sinners, they nerve his will. For it
is will—
will organized and disciplined and inspired,
will qui-
escent in rapt adoration or straining in
violent energy,
but always will—which is the essence of
Puritanism,
and for the intensification and
organization of will
every instrument in that tremendous arsenal
of religious
fervour is mobilized. The Puritan is like
a steel
spring compressed by an inner force, which
shatters
every obstacle by its rebound. Sometimes
the strain
is too tense, and, when its imprisoned energy
is released,
it shatters itself.
The spirit bloweth where it listeth, and
men of every